

**City of Reading
City Council
Work Session
Monday, October 18, 2010**

Councilors Attending: V. Spencer, F. Acosta, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, D. Reed, D. Sterner, J. Waltman

Others Attending: C. Younger, C. Jones, L. Kelleher, F. Denbowski, C. Geffken, D. Robinson, N. Nemeth, J. Kromer

Vaughn D. Spencer, President of Council, called the Work Session to order at approximately 7:05 pm.

Public Hearing – North 6th Street Repaving Project

Mr. Archibald from an engineering firm working with PennDOT stated that this public hearing is required as part of the federally funded process. The public hearing was appropriately advertised. He stated that the repaving project will run North on 6th Street from Amity to Heister's Lane. He added that Bern Street will also be repaved between North 5th and North 6th Street. He stated that the project is 100% funded by the federal government with allocations as follows:

- \$400K for design and construction
- \$100K for PennDOT inspection fees

He stated that the cost of the project will include the upgrade of ADA handicapped ramps at all intersections. He stated that traffic flow will not be disrupted during the project.

Mr. Waltman expressed the concern about the paving material used on North 9th Street and some other streets within the City. He stated that the paving material used was expected to flatten out; however that has not occurred. He noted the difficulties people are having with the roughened paving service. He inquired about the repaving material to be used for this project.

Mr. Jones explained the use of the alternative paving material which was done to buy time and avoid a complete repaving, which would require the correction of all the handicapped ramps. He explained that the handicapped ramps when they were put in, back in the 70's and 80's, were up to current standards; however standards have changed and the City must reinstall the handicap ramps whenever repaving projects

are done. Mr. Jones stated that the paving project on North 6th Street will use the normal macadam material

When the floor was open for public comment, no one came forward to speak; therefore the public comment period was closed.

Managing Director's Report

Interim Managing Director Carl Geffken read the report distributed to Council at the meeting covering the following:

- Explaining that the Mayor will be monitoring the budget discussion while he's away on vacation
- Encouraging RAWA to increase the current water rate by 10%
- Beginning a new \$500K business loan program (funding by the State)
- Planning for the \$6.2M redevelopment project at 8th and Oley

Housing Strategy

Mr. Kromer introduced himself to Council stating that he does a variety of housing and economic development work for the FEL's Institute and University of Penn and will be filling the role of Housing and Economic Development Coordinator. He stated that the Act 47 recovery plan requires the City to draft an Economic Development and Housing Strategy. He described his similar work in other Pennsylvania cities. He stated that he foresees success in the implementation of both plans due to the level of interest from City employees and City residents. He also noted that unlike other cities, Reading does have some level of internal leadership. He stated that the Housing Strategy is due March 2011 and the Economic Development Strategy is due February 2011.

Mr. Kromer described his plan to develop two (2) separate work groups to assist with the development and the implementation of the plans. He noted the need for City Council representatives to participate.

Mr. Kromer stated that he will be providing regular updates to City Council and the DCED as the work progresses.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz expressed the belief that the housing work group should include representatives from some social service programs, due to the number of low income residents who reside in the majority of City housing.

Mr. Kromer noted that he wishes to begin implementing the plan as it is drafted so he has opportunity to monitor the plan before he has completed his assignment at the end

of February 2011.

Ms. Reed agreed with the need for the plan to be implemented quickly. She also noted the need for the plan to consider some type of re-gentrification of Reading.

Mr. Sterner urged the alignment of the Codes and Zoning offices so proper enforcement can take place.

Mr. Waltman expressed the belief that curing the City's housing problem is the main key to the comeback of Reading. He also questioned the amount of good leadership around the housing issue.

Mr. Spencer noted the need to monitor the execution of the plan to ensure accountability from the involved parties. Mr. Kromer assured Council that he will mobilize the plan early so he can ensure the successful implementation of the plan.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz inquired if the plan will include some recommendations for legislative changes. Mr. Kromer replied affirmatively.

Mr. Acosta also questioned the City's leadership around housing and suggested that the Administration provide Mr. Kromer with tools to address personnel issues and get the job done.

Ms. Reed suggested that Mr. Kromer carefully select those he includes on the Economic Development workforce. She noted that there are several individuals who were once involved in the City's economic development area, who have caused many of the City's problems. She suggested avoiding putting these individuals on the work group.

Mr. Sterner noted the extreme frustration about the housing issue from all Council members.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that unlike other states Pennsylvania does not have any policy to prevent the centralization of low income people which has caused part of Reading's problem. She inquired if the plan will address that issue. Mr. Kromer replied that it will not address that specific issue directly; however part of that problem will be addressed.

Mr. Spencer stated that many of Reading's problems relate to the City's poor management of housing. He stated that unless the City's housing is corrected, economic development efforts and efforts to draw the middle class back to the City will

be stalled.

The Work Session adjourned at approximately 8:40pm.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk